

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 08384 131517Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 8384

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT CASE, SOPN, UR, US
SUBJECT: DETENTION OF LA TIMES CORRESPONDENT

REF: (A) MOSCOW 8349, (B) MOSCOW 6930

1. TOTH INCIDENT AT VERY LEAST WAS A "FAREWELL PRESENT" WITH ATTENDANT WARNING TO OTHERS FROM THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES TO ONE OF THE BEST AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS IN MOSCOW ON THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE. ALTHOUGH TOTH HAS HITHERTO MOSTLY BEEN SPARED MENTION IN THE RECENT SPATE OF ARTICLES CRITICIZING AMERICANS RESIDENT IN MOSCOW, THE AUTHORITIES SURELY KNOW OF HIS EXTENSIVE CONTACTS AMONG MOSCOW'S REFUSENIK COMMUNITY (TOTH WAS VERY FRIENDLY WITH ANATOLIY SHCHARANSKIY AND LIDA VORONINA. HE WAS ONE OF A VERY SMALL NUMBER OF FOREIGN FRIENDS OF VLADIMIR SLEPAK TO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO HIS SON'S WEDDING). THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES MAY HOPE THAT THE TOTH INCIDENT WILL CAUSE HIS SUCCESSOR AND OTHER WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS TO PULL IN THEIR HORNS. IN ANY CASE IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR THE SOVIETS TO SUBJECT FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ABOUT TO LEAVE MOSCOW TO SOME HARASSMENT.

2. THE INCIDENT MAY, HOWEVER, BE RELATED DIRECTLY TO THE SHCHARANSKIY CASE. TOTH MET PETUKOV THROUGH
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SHCHARANSKIY AND THIS FACT MAY BE KNOWN TO THE KGB. WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING ABOUT WHEN SHCHARANSKIY'S TRIAL WILL TAKE PLACE, BUT IF IT WERE TO BE SOON, THE AUTHORITIES MIGHT FIND IT USEFUL TO "ESTABLISH" THE EXTENT OF SHCHARANSKIY'S TREASONOUS ACTIVITIES BY BRINGING TOTH AND PETUKOV INTO THE CASE.

3. THE INCIDENT COULD ALSO BE CONNECTED WITH BELGRADE. AS WE HAVE OBSERVED BEFORE, (REF B) THE SOVIETS COULD WELL POINT TO THE ALLEGED ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS HERE AND SUGGEST THAT THEY WERE PERVERTING THE CSCE FINAL ACT PROVISION ON IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS FOR JOURNALISTS. IN THAT EVENT, THE TIMING OF THE TOTH INCIDENT, JUST BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE, BECOMES MORE PLAUSIBLE.

4. WHATEVER THE REASONS FOR THE STAGING OF THE INCIDENT, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE OPERATION HAD BEEN WELL PLANNED, AS THE PRESENCE AT THE POLICE STATION OF AN EXPERT IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY FROM THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES DEMONSTRATES. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL IF PETUKOV WAS INVOLVED WITH THE KGB FROM THE START, AND WE DO NOT RULE THIS OUT. WE ARE INCLINED TO SUSPECT, HOWEVER, EITHER THAT HE WAS FORCED TO COLLABORATE WITH THE KGB IN BOOBYTRAPPING TOTH (PERHAPS IN ORDER TO AVOID ARREST ON CHARGES OF HAVING PREVIOUSLY PASSED INFORMATION TO TOTH) OR (LESS LIKELY) THAT HE WAS SIMPLY NOT AWARE THAT AN OPERATION WAS GOING ON AT ALL.
TOON

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